

## ASH WEDNESDAY RITE Low Mass Form

The revised rite of Ash Wednesday was published in the 1962 edition of the *Missale Romanum*.

### PREPARATIONS

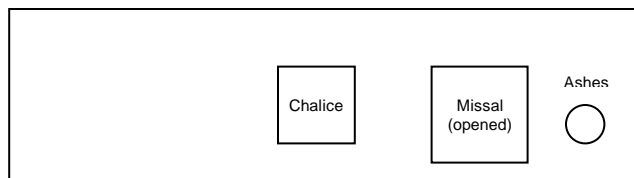
-the character of the day is penitential, thus:

- the liturgical color is violet.
- the vestments should be sober, but of better quality.
- lace (a symbol of joy), should be omitted from the altar linens and vesture.<sup>1</sup>
- flowers are forbidden on the altar and in the sanctuary.
- plainer items should be used (thurible, ewer and basin, etc.).<sup>2</sup>

-sacristy: amice, alb, violet stole, cincture, cope and biretta in vesting order.<sup>3</sup>

-altar: prepared as usual for High Mass with these additions:

- “The Missal, covered with violet, stands open on the Epistle-side....”<sup>4</sup>
- “...between the book and end of the altar, is a vessel containing the ashes...”<sup>5</sup> “This vessel—‘of silver or any other ornamental material’<sup>6</sup>—is covered with a lid of similar material or with a violet veil”<sup>7</sup> (cf. diagram of altar below).<sup>8</sup>



-sedilia: violet chasuble and maniple in vesting order.

-credence: as usual for High Mass<sup>9</sup> (including the dish and towel<sup>10</sup>) with these additions:

- ewer and basin filled with warm water.
- white towel on a tray.<sup>11</sup>
- clean bar of soap on a tray.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Celebration of Mass: A Study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal*, Rev. J.B. O'Connell (1964—reprinted by Preserving Christian Publications, 2007), p 448, ff 5.

<sup>2</sup> The practice of using fancy items for festal occasions and plainer ones for penitential days and Requiems is mentioned in the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* (1886) and by rubricians, in particular regarding the quality of the altar crucifix and candles.

<sup>3</sup> If a second priest will assist in distributing ashes, prepare a surplice and violet stole in the sacristy.

<sup>4</sup> *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described*, Rev. Adrian Fortescue (1962—reprinted by St. Austin Press, 1996), p 266. It was the custom in Rome to enclose the missal in a cloth cover matching the color of the Mass and to use a similarly-colored pillow or missal stand with a colored veil. This is a laudatory practice and should be practiced if possible.

<sup>5</sup> If C (or another priest distributing) does not have the *Memento* formula memorized, a card printed with the text and placed behind the vessel of ashes. It is held by an acolyte during the distribution.

<sup>6</sup> Fortescue, p 266, ff 3: “M.R. [*Missale Romanum*] (cf. C.E. [*Caeremoniale Episcoporum*]; II, xviii, 1).”

<sup>7</sup> Fortescue, p 266. It is recommended to place a matching tray under this vessel to protect the altar cloth.

<sup>8</sup> If a second priest will be distributing ashes simultaneously with C, then a second vessel should be prepared on the altar as the first.

<sup>9</sup> If necessary, a secondary credence may be used for the ewer, basin, and tray with soap and towel.

<sup>10</sup> For practical reasons the use of a ewer and basin is conceded to a priest for washing the hands after distributing the ashes (as it is impractical to do this with a cruet and small bowl). However, a priest must use a cruet and bowl during Mass because use of the ewer and basin for the *Lavabo* is a pontifical privilege.

<sup>11</sup> This towel should be larger than the usual *Lavabo* towel; a 15 inch square linen towel (or medium-size white cotton towel) is ideal.

- aspersory and aspergil.
- near the credence: thurible stand,<sup>12</sup> boat and thurible<sup>13</sup> with lit charcoal.

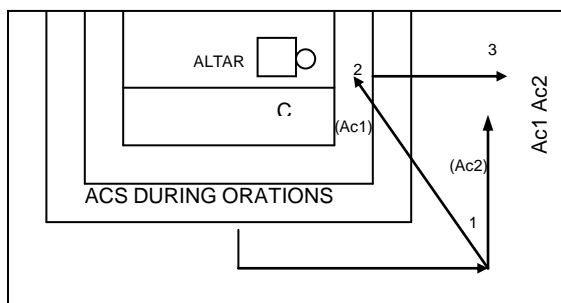
## NOTE ABOUT SOLITA OSCULA

Despite the penitential character of the day, per the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*<sup>14</sup> (and rubricians) the ceremonial kisses<sup>15</sup> are retained during the Ash Wednesday rite. As usual, the *solita oscula* are given both before the acolyte presents to C the incense spoon, thurible, aspergil and biretta and upon receiving them back.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE CEREMONY

1. PROCESSION (as for Low Mass)
2. BLESSING OF ASHES
  - *Exaudi nos, Domine.*
  - Four orations.
  - Blessing of incense.
  - Blessing of ashes first with holy water (while *Asperges* is said), then with incense.
3. DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES
  - C goes to center of predella.
  - C receives his ashes.
  - Acolytes receive ashes on predella.<sup>16</sup>
  - Laity receives ashes at rail.
4. WASHING OF C's HANDS AT EPISTLE SIDE
5. ORATION: CONCEDE NOBIS, DOMINE
6. LOW MASS AS USUAL except:
  - Preparatory Prayers inclusive to *Oramus* are omitted.
  - Tract: all kneel when the verse *Adjuva nos* is said.
  - Postcommunion: additional bow is made during the Lenten season.

## PROCESSION—ORATIONS



-the acolytes and C process in as they would for Low Mass, genuflecting at the foot.

-C ascends to the predella, kisses the altar and then goes to the missal.

-meanwhile the acolytes turn inwards and proceed to sanctuary's Epistle side shoulder to shoulder, splitting up near the corner of the foot.

-Ac1 goes immediately to the Epistle side of the altar, removes the veil and lid from the vessel of

ashes, and then places these items on the credence. Ac2 goes to the credence and remains standing in front of it facing the altar.

<sup>12</sup> It is recommended to place the thurible stand at least a foot away from the credence to safeguard the linen cloth.

<sup>13</sup> The thurible cover should be kept open while on the stand to cool off the and allow air flow over the charcoals.

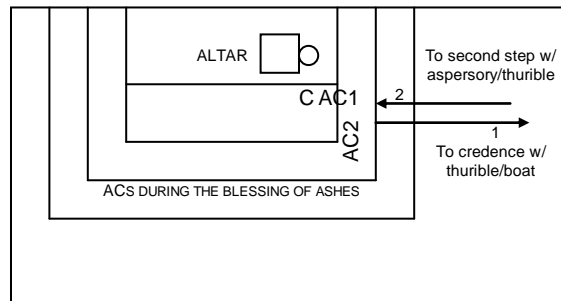
<sup>14</sup> Liber I, chap. XVIII, n. 16.

<sup>15</sup> The ceremonial kisses which give solemnity and signify joy in the blessings received from the priest; cf. *Caeremoniale in Missa, Privata et Solemni*, Msgr. C. Callewaert (1941—reprinted by Romanitas Press), p 38

<sup>16</sup> If there are clergy in choir, see the Ash Wednesday notes for High Mass form.

-during the four orations, both may remain at the credence facing across sanctuary;<sup>17</sup> they turn and bow towards the altar for each “Oremus”.

### BLESSING OF ASHES<sup>18</sup>



-after all four orations, Ac1 retrieves the boat, while Ac2 retrieves the thurible.

-both acolytes ascend to the predella, where Ac1 presents the spoon with *solita oscula* and bowing slightly to C says “*Benédicite, Pater reverénde*”<sup>19</sup> before C imposes and blesses the incense as usual.

-Ac1 gives the thurible and boat to Ac2; both acolytes turn inwards and return to the credence,

where Ac1 retrieves the aspersion while Ac2 puts the boat on the stand.

-both return to the altar, Ac1 ascends completely up to the predella and presents the aspergil to C with *solita oscula*, while Ac2 remains on the second step with the thurible.

-Ac1 holds the cope back by its ophrey<sup>20</sup> as C sprinkles the ashes three times while saying the antiphon *Asperges me* omitting the psalm.

-when C has sprinkled the ashes, Ac1 receives the aspergil back and trades the aspersion with Ac2 for the thurible which he gives to C with the *solita oscula*. Ac2 returns the aspersion to the credence and then resumes his position on the second step.

-Ac1 holds the cope back as C incenses the ashes with three singles fanned saying nothing.

-afterwards, Ac1 gives the thurible back to Ac2 who returns it to the stand.

### DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

-if there is another priest present, after the blessing he comes to the altar and without wearing a stole<sup>21</sup> puts ashes on C’s head.<sup>22</sup>

-the priest then kneels on the predella, puts on his stole, receives his ashes on his head, descends to the foot, genuflects and returns to his place.<sup>23</sup>

-meanwhile, Ac1 meets Ac2 at the foot, where both genuflect and await their turn to receive ashes.

-when it is the acolytes’ turn to receive ashes, they ascend and kneel at the predella to receive their ashes from C.

-the acolytes stand and Ac1 goes to C’s right and holds the vessel with ashes while Ac2 goes to C’s left.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Or Ac1 may go to C’s right side and hold the cope back whenever he actually blesses the ashes (but not during the entire prayer).

<sup>18</sup> This follows the Roman principle of performing the various preparatory blessings first (e.g., holy water, which usually was made prior, and blessed incense, which is always made at the moment when needed) before proceeding to the blessing of the sacramental (e.g., candles and ashes) or object (e.g., the catafalque during the Absolution). However, in the revised rite of Palm Sunday, this typical Roman order is not followed.

<sup>19</sup> Pronounced: beh-neh-dee-chee-teh pah-tehr reh-vehr-rehn-deh.

<sup>20</sup> The overlay, or decorative panel, on the front of the cope.

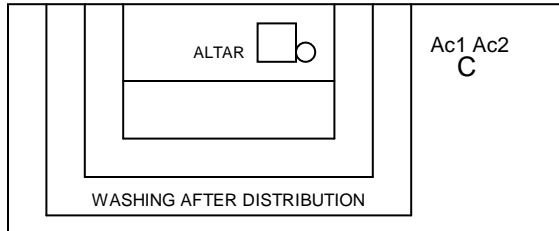
<sup>21</sup> Fortescue, p 267.

<sup>22</sup> Fortescue, p 268: “If no other priest is present the celebrant stands, facing the altar, and puts the ashes on himself, in the form of a cross, saying nothing. [SRC, 1 Nov. 1931].”

<sup>23</sup> If the highest-ranking cleric, presumably a priest, will not be assisting with the distribution, he may wash his hands in the sacristy’s sacrarium during that time.

-then the acolytes descend to the foot with C, turn inwards and genuflect to the altar, then accompany C to the Epistle side of the Communion rail.  
 -during the distribution both acolytes hold back the cope. Whenever the sanctuary's center is crossed, C and the acolytes must turn towards the altar and genuflect before continuing to the other side.

### WASHING OF C's HANDS AT EPISTLE SIDE



-after the distribution, C and the acolytes return to the foot, where Ac1 receives the vessel of remaining ashes from C, all genuflect, turn inwards, and the acolytes accompany C to the Epistle side *in plano*.

-Ac1 puts the vessel of ashes on the credence, then the acolytes pick up these washing items:

- Ac1: ewer and basin.
- Ac2: tray with soap and towel.

-near the credence, the acolytes wash C's hands bowing before and after as usual.<sup>25</sup>

### ORATION: EXAUDI NOBIS, DOMINE

-after C washes his hands, he goes *per brevior* to the missal and says the oration, *Exaudi nobis, Domine*. During this time, the acolytes remain at the credence standing.

-after the oration, C and the Ac1 "go straight to the sedilia, without a reverence to the cross..."<sup>26</sup> where C removes the cope and vests for Mass. Meanwhile, Ac2 puts the thurible items into the sacristy, as they are no longer required.<sup>27</sup>

-Ac1 takes the cope to the sacristy, returns to the sedilia, leads C to the foot, genuflects and then assumes his normal position for Low Mass.

### LOW MASS

Low Mass is as usual with these exceptions:

- Preparatory Prayers are omitted inclusive to *Oramus*.<sup>28</sup>
- during the Tract, all kneel in unison with C during the verse *Adjuva nos*.
- during the Postcommunion, the acolytes make a simple bow when C says "*Humiliate capite vestra Deo*" and during the prayer that follows inclusive to "*Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum...*"<sup>29</sup>

### AFTER MASS

-the water in the basin should be poured into the sacrarium as it contains residual of the blessed ashes.

<sup>24</sup> If necessary, Ac2 holds the *Memento* card. If there is a second priest to assist with distributing ashes, Ac2 should hold the second vessel of ashes and accompany him on his right-hand side.

<sup>25</sup> If another priest was also distributing ashes, he must wash his hands *after* C does as this follows the rule of precedence. Cf. Fortescue, p 268.

<sup>26</sup> Fortescue, p 268.

<sup>27</sup> If possible, the aspensory, the vessel of ashes, veil, lid and tray, should also be returned to the sacristy. Ac2 can do this even during the Introit (but only Ac2 should, since Ac1 will be needed to make the responses while Ac2 is occupied).

<sup>28</sup> There is no mention either in the *Missale Romanum* or in Fortescue about kissing the altar before saying the Introit.

<sup>29</sup> A separate bow is not made for the Holy Name since one is already bowing.